

CLAIMS

1. A method for controlling a production line for the manufacture and/or
 5 packaging of contact lenses which production line simultaneous by processes
 at least two lots, the method comprising dividing at least a portion of the
 production line into a series of cells through which the contact lens pass
 sequentially, and providing a control system comprising at least three shifts
 registers each containing information about each of said cells, including:
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 - (a) a location shift register which indicates whether a cell should be empty
 or occupied,
 - (b) a lot data shift register which is a non-binary shift register and contains
 15 manufacturing and/or prescription data about the contact lens which should
 be in the cell and
 - (c) a condition shift register which provides an indication of the condition of
 the product in the cell,
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 and simultaneously indexing all of said shift registers as a lens passes down
 the production line from one cell to the next cell.
2. A method as claimed in Claim 1 which comprises detecting the
 25 presence or absence of product in a cell and comparing the result with the
 information for that cell in the location shift register.
3. A process as claimed in Claim 2 in which a plurality of adjacent empty
 cells is inserted at the start and end of a manufacturing lot.
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4. A method as claimed in Claim 3 in which detection of said plurality of
 empty cells is used to trigger a processing event.

5. A process as claimed in Claim 4 in which the processing event is selected from resetting a processing station, wiping data from a processing station and instigating a reporting action.

5 6. A process as claimed in any preceding claim in which a gap comprising a predetermined number of empty cells is inserted between successive manufacturing lots on the production line and the control system comprises a gap defence mechanism including detectors and counters to monitor said gap as it proceeds down the production line.

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7. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which information from the lot data shift register is used to control the activity of a cell.

8. A process as claimed in any preceding claim which comprises the step
15 of inspecting the product in a cell and/or monitoring the production activity in a cell and comparing the resulting data with data in the lot data shift register.

9. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which information in the condition shift register is used to trigger ejection of a product from the
20 production line.

10. A method as claimed in Claim 9 in which ejection of product from the production line causes the location shift register to change to signify the cell is empty of product.

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